

SMALL FARM TRAINING GROUP

January 2021 Newsletter

This month's newsletter includes:

- Letter from the new SFTG Chairperson, Zoe Chinman
- Details of the new Small, Small Farmers initiative
 - Sow, Grow Cook
- A chance to chat chickens with Edwina and Richard



January 2021

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Letter from the Chair

By Zoe Chinman

After 3 fantastic years as Chairman, the constitution stipulates that our outgoing chairman Paul Lovett Smith has to step down and a new one elected. So the first newsletter of 2021 is coming from a new chair, as well as a largely new committee.

Some of you will already know or have met me, but for those who haven't, my name is Zoe and I live in Whitesmith near Chiddingly. Although I am relatively new to the SFTG, I served last year on the committee as Marketing Officer so have a little bit of experience of what a fabulous group we are.

The SFTG has been a life changer for me. I have met the most inspirational people, been given so much help and advice, met some life long friends and been truly welcomed into the countryside. All thanks to the warm welcome the committee have given me and the workshops and courses the SFTG have facilitated. I now want to give something back to our group and offer my time to continue the

What courses are coming up..

Please note all courses will be run in accordance with government guidance

FEBRUARY

28th February - Lambing Theory (via Zoom)

MARCH

7th March - Introduction to keeping pigs

13th March - Practical Lambing Workshop

21st March - Willow Weaving Workshop (garden obelisk)

amazing work that Paul and the committee have achieved over the last few years. So, what are we looking to achieve for 2021?

Fundamentally, we are still going to be the Small Farm Training Group. Within our existing membership, and in the population in general, there is a huge surge in interest of people wanting to move to the countryside. Maybe keep some animals and maybe even start a smallholding, and we want to help those people to learn the skills they need to be able to make it happen. The biggest change you will see over the next 12 months is how we deliver those courses and workshops. We are also aware that financially times are challenging, and we want to offer really good value, making sure we are as financially accessible to as many budgets as possible.

Member Led Workshops

So with that in mind, you are going to be seeing a lot more workshops that are led by the members themselves. Whether this is on pig rearing, growing vegetables or dehydrating food for winter storage. We have a wealth of knowledge right here in the group itself and we are going to be harnessing that knowledge to share with other members throughout 2021. The workshops will be held by members, for members. This may be in barns, around kitchen tables or even in member's gardens and polytunnels, all of which enables us to keep the costs of workshops to a minimum so we can pass that saving onto you, the members, or re-invest in our services.

New Team of Tutors

To join our fantastic team, we have an exciting new team of professional tutors. For 2021 we are adding in a range of crafting skills, home brewing, and food storage workshops trying to cover as many of the skills needed to either run a small holding, a large garden or a self-sufficient lifestyle. If there is a course or workshop that you would like to see offered, please do get in touch with us and we will do our best to get one arranged.

New! Small Small Farmers

Other changes that you will see is the introduction of the Small, Small Farmers, led by our Vice Chair, Debbie Gordon, helped by Denise of Hope Springs at Chiddingly. These events focus on the under 16's, whether these are members children, of grandchildren, we want to get them involved. There are already a series of events planned and you can read more later in this newsletter as Debbie tells us more about the Small SFTG plans.

Buying, Selling, Bartering

27th March - An Introduction
Smallholding

MAY 2021

15th May - Everything
Elderflower

If there is a course you would like to do but haven't seen listed please don't hesitate to let us know.

Get Social

Don't forget that we're also on Facebook and Instagram...why not follow us and see what we're up to!

Insta:

@small_farm_training_group

Facebook:

Small Farm Training Group



Why not let us follow you and your Facebook/Insta accounts and we can help you with your smallholding dreams and promote your goods to SFTG followers?

Jobs for the month

By Caroline Upton



We want to do more to help our members trade, barter, sell to each other and members of the public who are interested in buying. This can be livestock, feed, silage or finished products in terms of butchered meat, honey, or homemade produce. So long as it is related in some way to smallholding, we would like to try and help you sell it. We are going to be looking at the best way to do this, whether through our Facebook page, an additional page on our website, or through our newsletter. Don't forget there is still the members forum for selling goods to other members.

If you have something you wish to sell, or you would like to advertise your products, please email marketing@sftg.org.uk and we will help you with marketing and promotion.

Get Social

For the first time ever, we not only have a Facebook page but we also now have our own Instagram page! ... Following the AGM, we now have a Social Media Manager - Jeanette. Some of you may have already seen the amazing work Jeanette has been doing to promote the groups activities but did you know she can also help promote your social media pages?

Meet the Member

2021 will see several Meet the Member events. For about 2 hours you can take a walk around a fellow member's garden or land, ask them lots of questions about what works for them and then end the session with a nice cup of tea and cake. We have found these small groups to be thoroughly enjoyable during the summer months of 2020 and hugely beneficial to those that attend. In June 2021 we are also running a series of "Open Farm Events" so we're looking for lots of volunteers to throw open their doors and let us come and meet you and share your knowledge. If you would be happy to open your doors as a "meet the member" please email chair@sftg.org.uk.

Friday Night Meetings

Following some very successful meetings in early 2020, Jenny kindly agreed to continue in this role for 2021. She has been joined by her husband Cliff as an extra pair of hands and between them, they will be responsible for organising Friday night meetings once the Covid restrictions have been lifted.

Competitions

2021 will be the year of the competition. Heaviest onion, largest marrow, biggest pumpkin, best sloe gin, tallest sunflower, best scarecrow, you get the idea.. We are still finalising the exact nature of our plans for 2021 but essentially we want to build on the fun that

People always say not much happens in January and they are probably right. It's not the right time for sowing all seeds (not outside anyway) but you can still put the time to good use by planning and prepping for the season ahead.

Take stock of your old vegetable seeds and throw away any that are past their best. Most seeds will store well in a cool dark place but even these have their limits. Now might be the time to treat yourself with some new seeds and (fingers crossed!) guarantee a bumper harvest. Why not try some heritage crops?

www.Pennardplants.com offer a wide range of heritage and heirloom seeds.

Plan your vegetable beds.

The tried and tested rotation is:

Start with something from the pea family (they put nitrogen into the soil), follow with brassicas (they use nitrogen) and finish with roots (they don't want anything). Then manure and repeat...

Plant swaps..

We all know what it's like. You get carried away with the sowing of vegetable seeds and then you're looking at an abundance of seedlings when you really only needed a few.

Why not post your unwanted plants on the SFTG forum and see if one of the other

some of us had this summer and get as many of you involved as possible. This will culminate with the 2021 AGM, a big party prize and prize giving award evening, we are going to make up for not have a social event in 2020, with a super big one in 2021.

Put the date in your diary now - **Friday 19th November 2021** and I hope you can all join me then.

That's it from me for now, I hope you enjoy reading our first Newsletter of 2021, and I wish you all a healthy and Happy New Year on behalf of the SFTG committee.

Zoe Chinman

A chance to chat chickens...

By Julia Jennings

On an extremely blustery afternoon in September, 5 of us enjoyed a visit to Edwina and Richard Moore's small holding in Dallington. Currently they only have 3 hens but with very careful attention to the living conditions and welfare of the birds, they receive three eggs a day all throughout year.

Richard has built, based on many years of chicken keeping experience (they used to have 150), the perfect living quarters for them. The hen house itself is situated within a dry poly tunnel with double doors for added protection from draughts. For the same reason the entrance should be at right angles to the nesting boxes. Windows should face south or east with the perches placed opposite these.

Everything in the living quarters should be kept as dry and warm as possible. Maximum light levels encourage longer hours of feeding for the hens to maintain yield. In winter the Moore's have automatic lights that come on to supplement the daylight hours, giving the hens a minimum of 13 hours of light.

Red mite is a big problem for chickens but Richard has a solution that keeps them to the very minimum. He has designed a mite trap made of corrugated cardboard that are taped under the perches. The pests love to hide away in here and combined with a painting of Neem oil in all cracks and crevices mite destruction is very successful.

We enjoyed sheltering from the wind in Richard's multi-faceted glass dome at the end of the visit. He built it himself, and as well as growing excellent vegetables that require heat, it can almost kiln dry his log supply!

members wants to have them or maybe even swap with some seedlings that they have an abundance of?

Pickled Biquenhos

By Jenny Huggett



This month's recipe is one we use to preserve our biquenho peppers, so that we have a taste of summer in our winter salads.

Makes one pint (500 ml)

1 cup (250 ml) white vinegar
1 cup (250 ml) cachaça (or vodka)
1 Tbsp granulated white sugar
1 tsp salt
ripe biquinho peppers (or other variety)

Make the preserving liquid by combining the vinegar, cachaça (or vodka), sugar and salt in a pan, bring the liquid to the boil. Have warm sterilised jars at the ready. Prepare a large mixing bowl by filling it halfway with cold water, then adding several ice cubes. Put the peppers in the boiling water and let boil for 20 seconds only. Remove from the heat and plunge into the ice-cold water. Drain the



peppers, pack into jars, cover with the liquid and seal.

Seed Swaps

A great way to share excess seeds - running now until 1st March.

Do you only want to grow a few French climbing beans, but end up with 40 seeds so that lots go to waste? Why not take part in our fun free SFTG seed swap to share your excess and maybe get something interesting in return...

Swap will be open from now, until 1st March 2021.

To take part, post 1-5 packets of seed to;
Debbie Gordon,
Seed Swap,
Sanctuary Farm,
Pick Hill,
Horam,
East Sussex
TN21 0JP, (include a SAE for your return packets)

Seeds must be less than 2 years old. If you are making up your own packets please include an amount of seed to produce a reasonable harvest - eg 12 sweetcorn or 10 tomato seeds, but 15-20 runner bean. Please label your seeds clearly.

You will receive an equivalent amount of packets (not seeds!) that you send in. This is a 'pot luck' affair. You will receive back something different than you send in, but sometimes this may be a





different variety of, for example, tomato. Vegetable seeds only please.

Handy hint of the month...

Make your very own plant labels by getting some hazel sticks and (carefully) making one end into a point then slice off some bark on the other end to make a flat area. Write on it and voila, your very own sustainable, rustic and kind of cute plant labels..



Sow, Grow and Cook

By Jenny Huggett

You may think there is nothing to sow in January, but you would be wrong! Late January is the time to start sowing pepper and chilli seeds, because in this climate they need a long growing season to ripen, though you can get away with sowing them as late as March. However, you must provide the sown seeds with a temperature of 27-30°C for them to germinate. An airing cupboard or above a boiler is ideal. There are a huge number of seed varieties, especially of chilli. I prefer eastern European pepper varieties to the modern Dutch and English varieties because they have more flavor (Macedonian is available from the Heritage Seed Library). If anyone finds Gogosari peppers buy me some! My seed failed last year, and it is quite simply the best pepper I have tasted. With chillis it's best to choose a shape and heat level that appeals to you. I like the varieties that have three different coloured chillis on one plant. We also grow Biquenho chillis. Small heart shaped fruit with almost no heat that are very popular in Brazil for garnishing salads.

As your seedlings become plants pot them on, and feed feed feed! Nothing needs feeding as much as this family of plants, twice a week is optimal once they start flowering, until the fruit is all set. If you are

Welcome....

We'd like to give a warm and hearty welcome to the following people who have joined the SFTG in the last 6 months.

We are very much looking forward to learning more about you and what you are doing over the next few months. Our new members are:

Pippa, Amy & George
Wagstaff and David Styles
(Chiddingly), Chris and Emily

going to plant them out in a greenhouse or polytunnel, feeding is not quite so crucial, but still important. If growing in pots, the final pot size should be at least 5 litres. Watch out for greenfly and whitefly, these can successfully be deterred using the organic approved Grazer's insect spray that makes the plants unpalatable to critters. With a heated greenhouse you can overwinter your plants, but they tend to develop mould, and I don't honestly think it is worth the heating bill. That said I still (mid December) have a very healthy chilli plant in my greenhouse that is only heated when there is a frost warning.

I save seed from all mine because I have varieties I have brought home as seed from Romania and The Canaries, that are not available here. You will get occasional crossing of varieties, but I have not yet had problems.



Small, Small Farmers Training Group

By Debbie Gordon

Welcome to the Small Small Farmers section,

We're really keen to involve our younger farmers this year. We've got some great activities for our younger members planned for the year; bottle feeding lambs, going on farm walks and enjoying picnics and scavenger hunts. There will also be a small farmers vegetable growing competition running alongside the adults one too. (if your children are too old, you can involve the grandchildren - as long as they are under 16).

Debbie Gordon is co-ordinating our "Small" Small Farmers and if you'd like to get in touch you can contact her at vicechair@sftg.org.uk.

Huskins (Arlington), Jenny, Adam and Gabriel Kirley (Weybridge), Edward McNeil (Ashford), Emma Karwacki (Horley), Jennifer Pellett (East Hoathly), Philippe and Deborah Arnould (Horsham), Francis Hodge (Eastbourne), Karen & Alex & Bluebell & Tilda Nicholls (Hailsham), Jane Bryan (Wrotham), Di & Pete Bowley (Uckfield), Annmarie & Jonathan Roberts (Seaford), Clementine Macmillan-Scott (Crowborough), Denise Taylor (Framfield), Jeanette Arthur (Lewes), Mr. & Mrs. Simon Witheridge (Horsted Keynes), Ruth & Tony Coulson (Egerton), Alice & Kim Burgess, Lewis Cook and Ric Froggatt (Tonbridge), Geoff Gordon (Horam), Tracey Cumming and Chris Williams (Lower Beeding), Chris & Adam Dreyfus-Gibson (London)

SFTG Covid Plan 2021

At the time of writing, we are in lockdown and have had to postpone our January

courses and events. With a mass vaccination programme on the horizon we are hopeful that we will be able to offer at least some services in 2021 to our members, our outside events, whether these are meet the member, or practical lambing, look likely to be given the go ahead first

In every newsletter we will have a competition for our younger members and would urge you to take part if you can! We'll publish winning entries in the next newsletter and on our Social Media pages and will be sending out some brand new SFTG rosettes too!

Small, Small Farmers Favourite Christmas Joke

Why did the police arrest the turkey? They suspected fowl play.

What did the turkey say to the computer? Google, google, google!

Why did the turkey cross the road? The chicken had the day off.

Small, Small Farmers Competition Time

Can you capture what winter means to you in a photo?

Whether it is a frosty morning, a frozen pond, sheep wearing scarves, or a roaring log fire - we want to see what winter means to you. Please email your entry to vicechair@sftg.org.uk by 1st March 2021

The winner will be notified by 10th March, and the winning entry published in the next newsletter.

AGM Minutes

Minutes of the Small Farm Training Group Annual General Meeting 2020

Held online via Zoom on Friday 20th November 2020 via "Zoom".

The meeting started at 7.30 pm, chaired by Paul Lovatt Smith. He explained that all the annual reports from committee members were available on the website and that only the Chair's and Treasurer's report would be gone through at this meeting.

1. Apologies for absence: Received from Shirley Goulder and June and Melanie Lake
2. Approval of 2019 AGM minutes: These were approved.
3. Chair's report: (attached)
4. Treasurer's report and approval of audited accounts: (attached). The accounts were approved by a show of hands.
5. Questions on reports: There were no questions
6. Statement of intent - our exciting new plans: (attached).

At the end of her statement Zoe asked if there were any questions. Paul Lovatt Smith asked if she could clarify the plan for courses and the costs charged to members for attending. Zoe replied that as many courses as possible would be run by tutors who were members and

if the rules in 2020 are anything to go by.

We will be following official advice from Gov.uk and will keep our members updated. Any courses that are postponed, cancelled, or re-arranged due to a change in Gov.uk advice, will be liable for a full refund if you cannot attend.

Fingers crossed we will all be back to normal in the not too distant future.....

Bring on the Farmers

Everyone is worried
When will we get our job?
We're all stuck in lockdown
Life has become so drab.

We should hand it to the farmers
It would only take a week
They've had lots of practice
Injecting all those sheep.

I reckon they could do
They've got some decent kit,
If they line up all their hurdles
They'll do it in one hit.

The ones who keep the cattle
Well, they could use a crush,
The dogs would sort the queue out
There is no need to rush.

They may even change the needle
Every hour or so,
And they will keep on going
Through wind and rain and snow.

And whilst we are together

that courses would be for members only, in order to keep costs as low as possible.

7. Election of committee members: The following were elected by a show of hands:

- a. Chair: Zoe Chinman
 - b. Treasurer: Jenny Cloke
 - c. Vice-Chair: Debbie Gordon
 - d. Membership Secretary: Michelle Oster
 - e. Friday Evenings Organisers: Jenny Huggett and Cliff Bayliss
 - f. Newsletter Editor: Caroline Upton
 - g. Marketing: Jeanette Arthur
8. Any Other Business: None

Buying, Selling and Bartering

If any members want to publicize anything that they are wanting to buy, sell or barter please email editor@sftg.org.uk with the details.

Alternatively, you can also email getsocial@sftg.org.uk and Jeanette can put a shout out on our social media pages.

Glendale Manor Farm Catering - 'Let's get crackling'

Hopefully we can party this year! I've just set up my mobile catering unit, specialising in burgers and sausages as well as pulled pork. But I can cook whatever you would like! I aim to mostly use salads grown here along with my own woodland reared pork or goat, but am also spending tier 4 time doing a vegan cookery course so can please every taste.

Do please get in touch
Catrionabush@gmail.com



Weaners for Sale

Oxford Sandy & Black Weaners

Ready 15th March

Boys £50

Girls £65

Electric fence trained, home reared in woodland in Whitesmith.

Please contact Zoe on 07540 633909



They could even check our teeth
And fire up the shearing handsets
And give us a trim beneath!

Letter from the (new) editor...

We've now moved the frequency of the newsletter from every 6 months to every 2 and we're keen to make it as interesting and relevant to you as possible. Just like our new Chairman Zoe, I know you all have your own super interesting stories behind what made you take up a more sustainable 'good life' existence and I'd love to hear about them so we can share them with the group. Also if you have any ideas for articles, want to share a winning recipe or have any small holding hints and tips then I'd love to hear from you.

Please do get in contact with me on editor@sftg.org.uk

Point of Lay Chickens for Sale

White Dekalb (white eggs) £18
French Maram (chocolate brown eggs) £30
Dorking Cockerels £10
All will be ready end of Jan
Contact Denise Taylor 07843 007537



Weaners for Sale

Oxford Sandy & Black Weaners
Ready 15th April
Boys £50
Girls £65
Home reared in Pick Hill
Please contact Debbie on 07753
442878



Pork boxes for Sale

We are taking orders for pork boxes! Boxes are £75 and contain joints, chops, sausages, fillet and my favourite pork belly.
Great value, fabulous rare breed, Oxford Sandy and Black meat raised outside and chemical free - you really can taste the difference.
Drop me a line and I'll deliver you a box mid February.
Please contact Debbie on 07753 442878

